FINAL EDITION

AN INCOMPLETE ARCHIVE OF SHUTTERED NEWSPAPERS.

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Background

Final Edition is an ongoing artistic research project that strives to create a digital database of final editions of local newspapers that have closed across the USA in the last decade for London-based artist Anna Ridler. Estimates put this at over 1,800 papers since 2004, a result of technology and economics (roughly 25% of local papers). Due to the lack of documentation and institutional oversight in the archiving of these local papers, newspapers once closed are now almost impossible to find online and offline. Missing or outdated data exists across national and local databases because of insufficient funding to preserve local communities' history.

Learn more about Anna Ridler & her work

Methodology

Researching in Sweeps

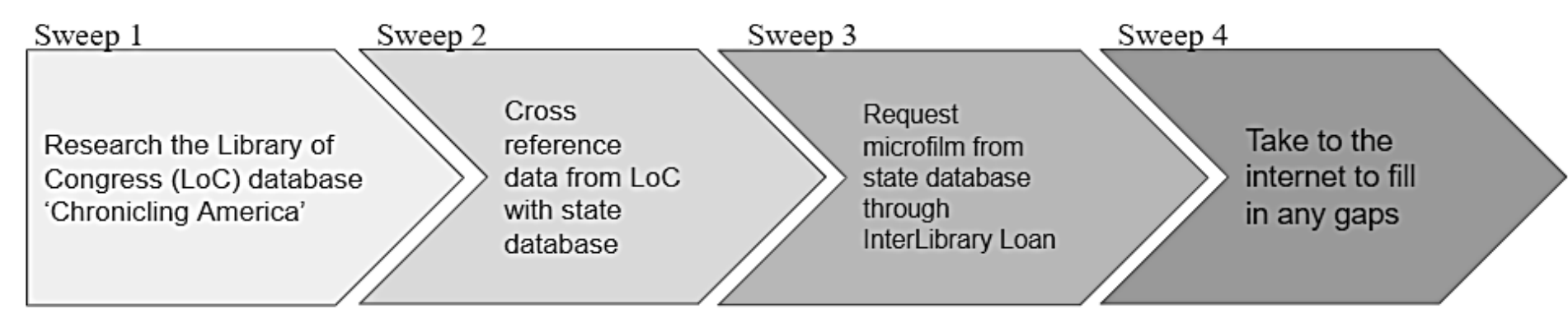A manual system to tackle the 2,160 newspapers publicly recorded closed.

Figure 1: Researching in "Sweeps" Process

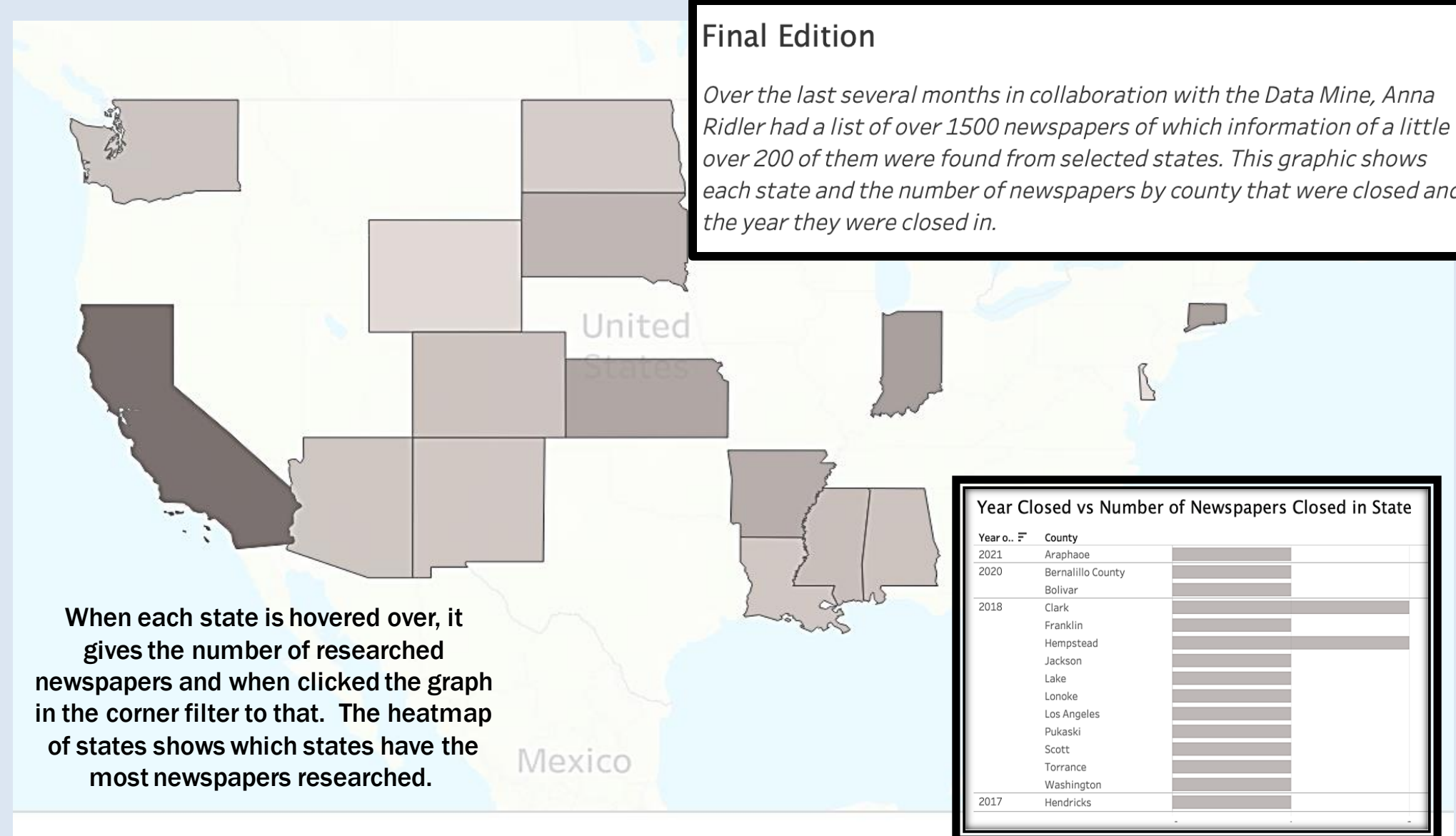## Final Edition Geovisualization Progress

Final Edition

Over the last several months in collaboration with the Data Mine, Anna Ridler had a list of over 1500 newspapers of which information of a little over 200 of them were found from selected states. This graphic shows each state and the number of newspapers by county that were closed and the year they were closed in.

When each state is hovered over, it gives the number of researched newspapers and when clicked the graph in the corner filter to that. The heatmap of states shows which states have the most newspapers researched.

Figure 2: Map of the states researched with all counties and newspapers closed in specific year

Library of Congress Automation

Goal: Automate Sweep 1 of manual research on the Library of Congress database

Why: Save the team time by reducing the manual workload.

Process:
- Create an excel file with information of newspaper
- Search LoC database with python "requests"
- Convert output to json object for easier access
- Filter out non-matching paper name
- Obtain important information of each valid newspaper
  - Start date & end date
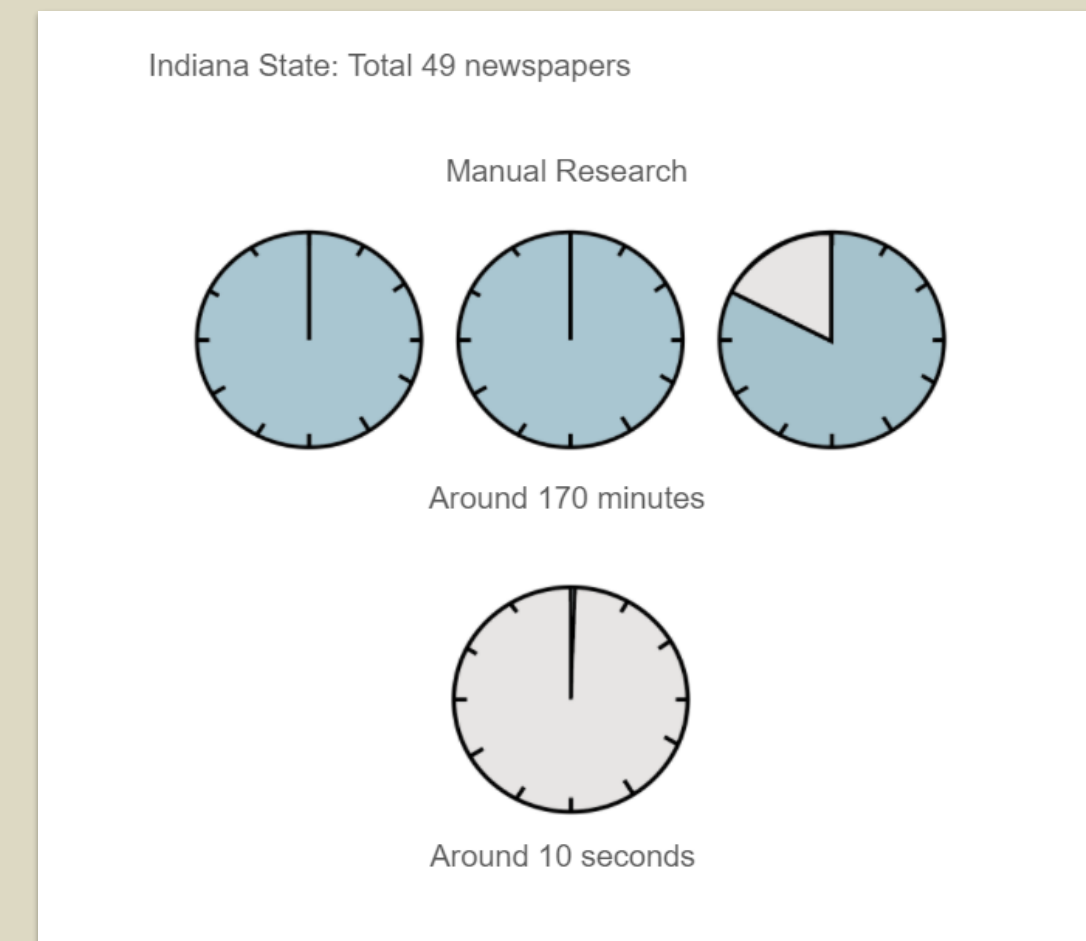- Save results into an excel file

Tools: LoC API package, python

Figure 3: Illustration of time saved by LoC automation for Sweep 1 of Indiana Newspapers

Rise of Technology & Newspaper Closures

One factor we believe is correlated to the decline of newspapers is the rise of social media platforms as news sources.
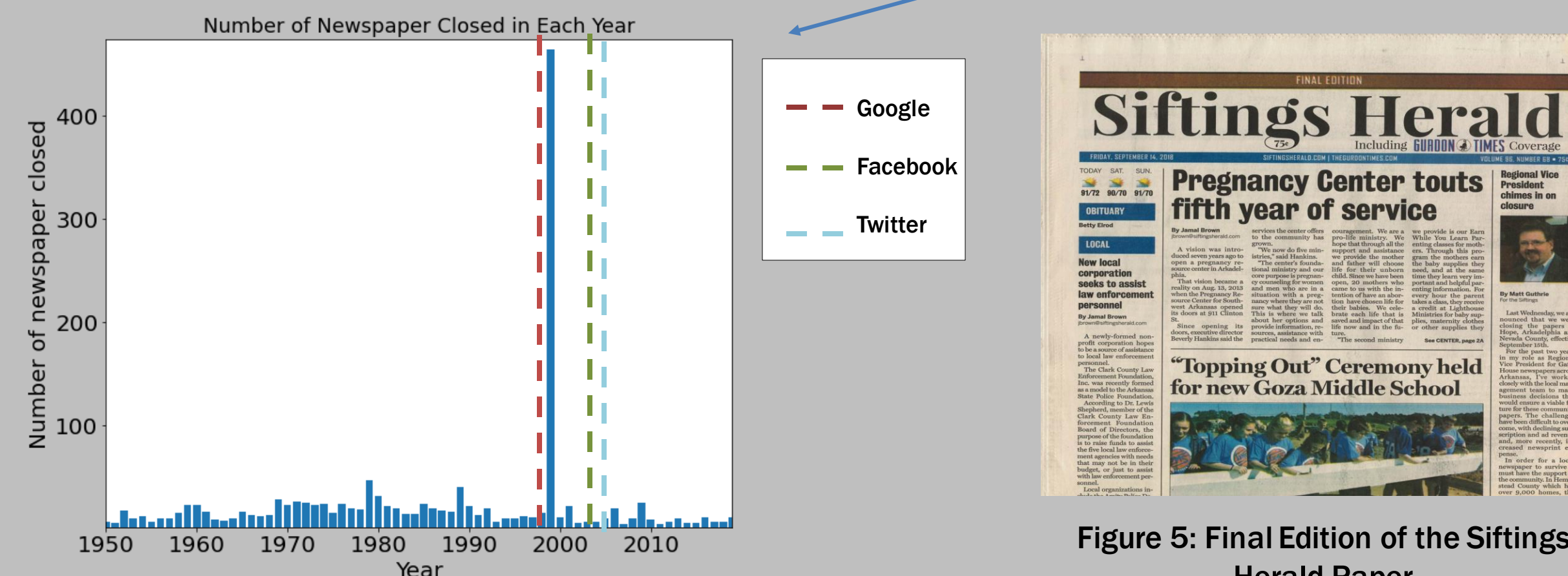

Figure 4: Plot of newspaper closures each year and lines indicating the founding dates of prominent tech/media companies

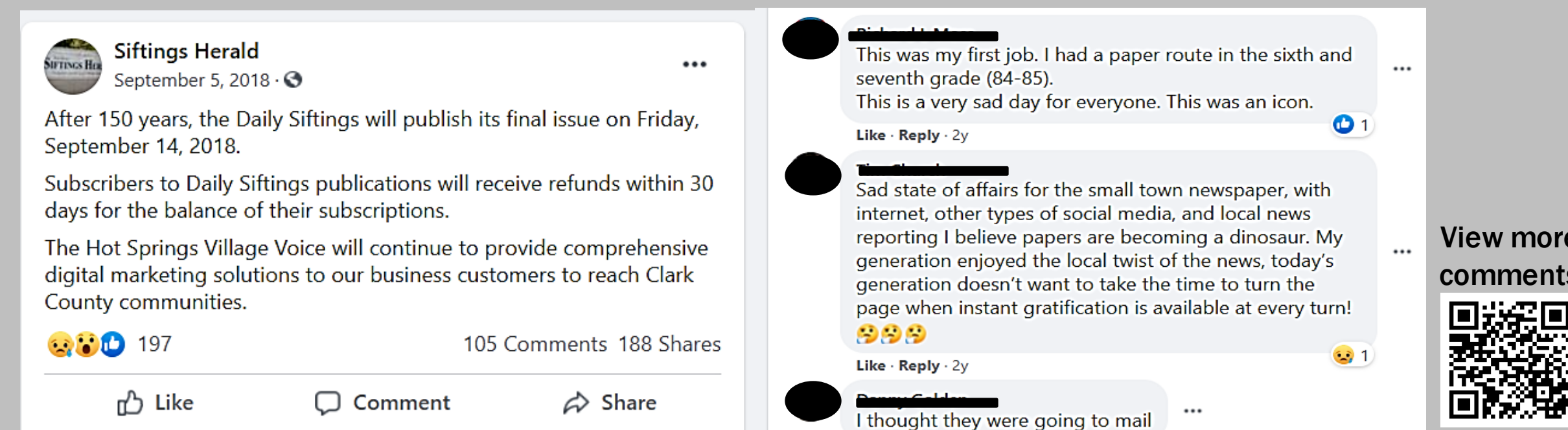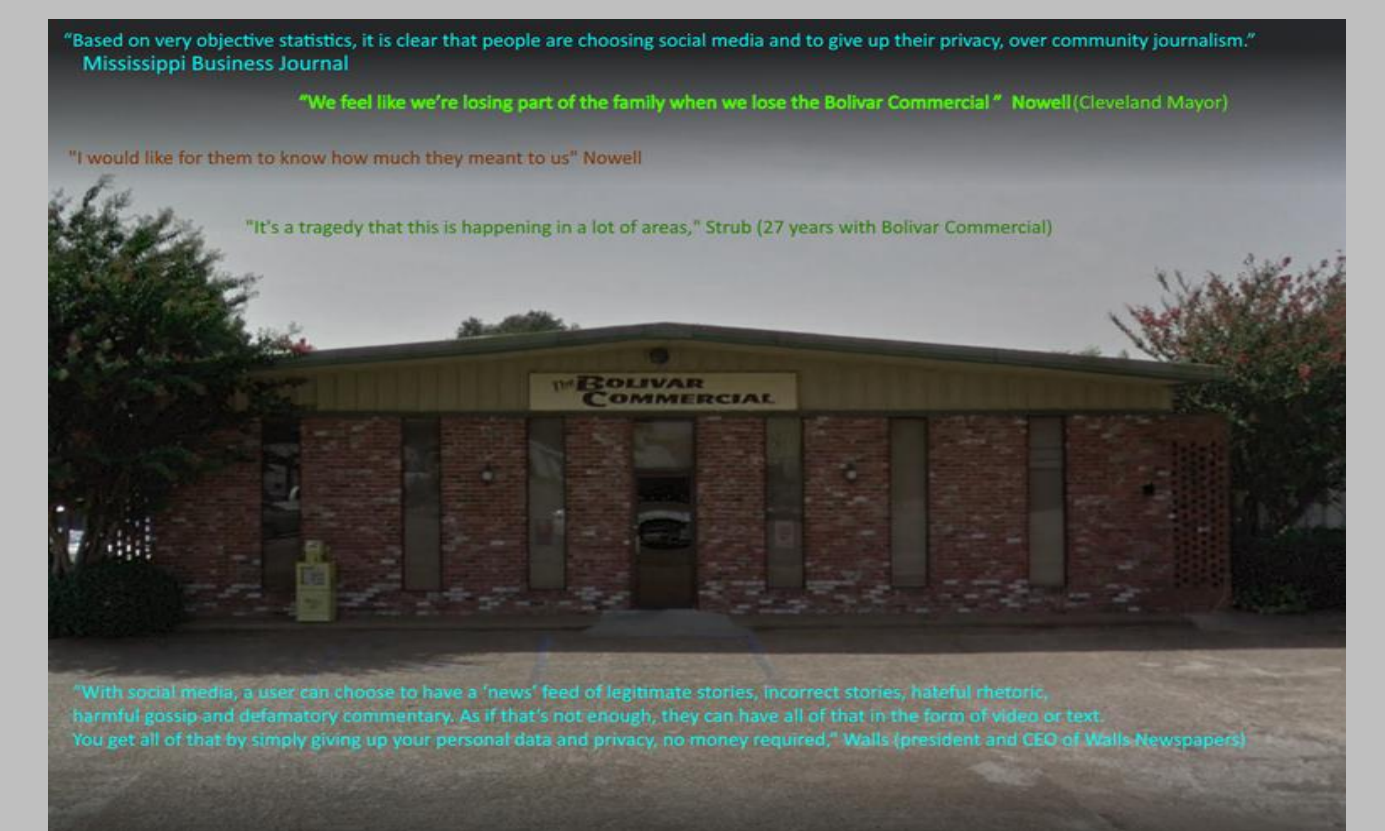Figure 5: Final Edition of the Siftings Herald Paper

Figure 6: The reactions of the community to the closure of the Siftings Herald Paper. (Screenshotted from the Siftings Herald Facebook Group)

Figure 7: Comments and criticisms on the closures of local newspapers

Facebook Automation

Goal: Create a tool to find patterns across the active FB groups of closed papers

Why: Understand the shift from paper to digital media and how it has affected these communities

Process:
- Iterate through manually collected FB groups
- Collect and compile data for each group: (Name, Last updated time, Frequency of posts, Engagement (number of likes/reactions & number of comments))
- Perform engagement analysis for groups
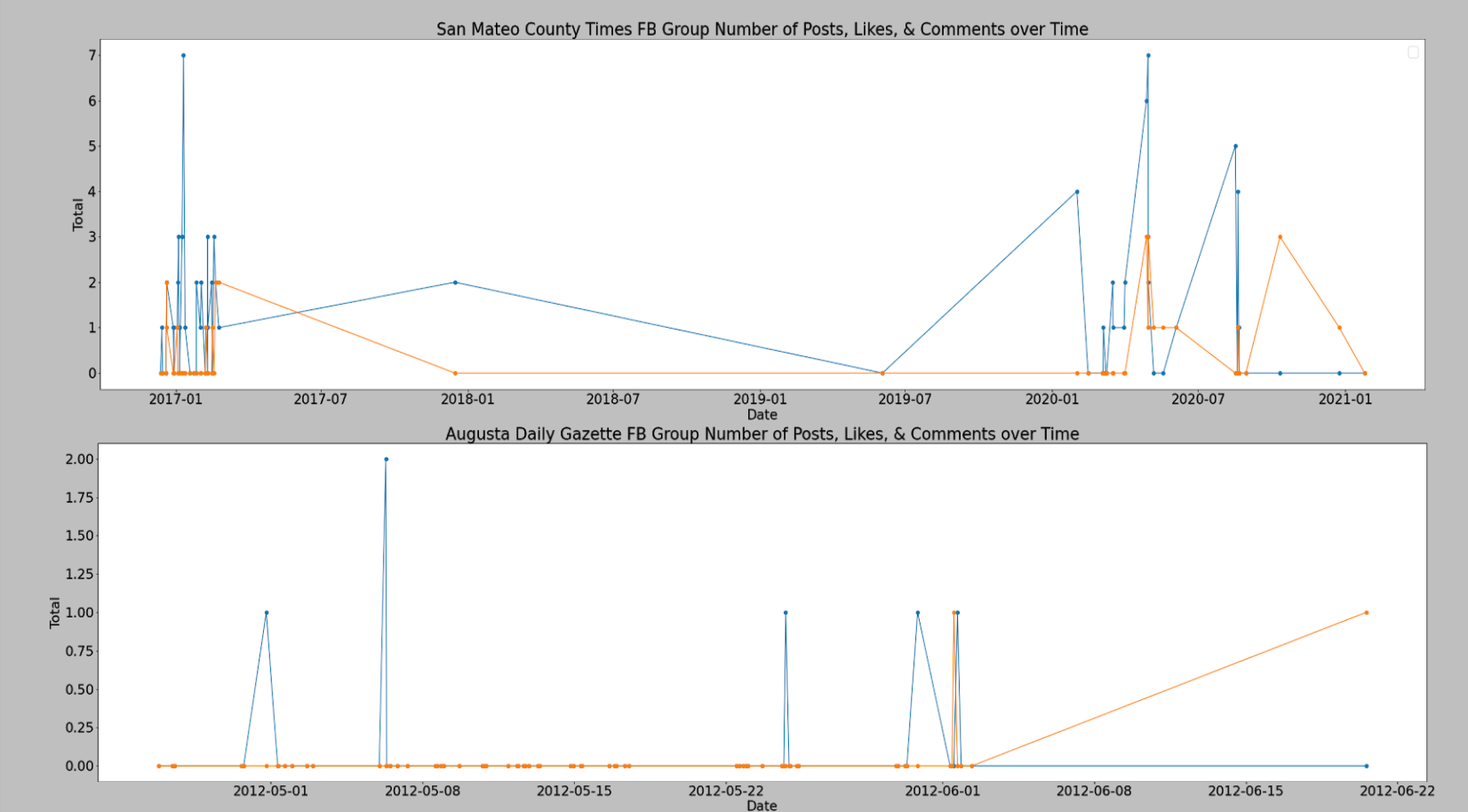
Tools: "facebook-scraper" package, python

Figure 8: Plots of likes and comments over the years for San Mateo County Times and Augusta Daily Gazette

References